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Leading Ideas



| 7 Steps for Making Disciples Through Relational Mentoring

By Ken Carter And Audrey Warren On January 10, 2018

Leading Ideas

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Kenneth H. Carter and Audrey Warren describe a simple, step-by-step process for making disciples and mentoring friends to be closer to Jesus — a process of faith formation that is increasingly important as more and more nontraditional expressions of church emerge.

For the unchurched, or “nones,” the language of becoming a disciple is entering a new world of practices, habits, and relationships. For the dechurched, or “dones,” the path of discipleship requires a detachment from negative experiences of church in the past and a turning toward the gift of new forms of church. And for leaders, lay and clergy, there is the essential and lifelong basic work of spiritual formation. At our best, we will be most effective and faithful as we accompany each other into the future God is preparing for us.

Once we are on the path of being a disciple, we soon discover that we are called to invite others into this way of life. Thus we need a simple method for making disciples or mentoring friends to be closer to Jesus.

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**Leaders do not need
Leaders must have**

Trevor Dancer, pastor
in Kansas City, Missoula
question in a sermon

*If people knew how much
to give more themselves*

Want more *Right Question
Leaders*.

“ There is a mutually reinforcing relationship between becoming a disciple and making disciples. We often learn best by teaching and leading: at the same time.

So how do we make, or mentor, new disciples?

1. Listen to the other person. This may happen in planned or unplanned ways – a meeting, over a succession of conversations, or perhaps in everyday life. In a culture that is cynical about faith, it is not wise to rush this step. Listening is a lifelong activity!
2. Reflect back to the person who you want to know and understand. For many persons, it is a rare experience to discover that others are listening to and honoring their stories.

These first two steps are essential and cannot be bypassed.

3. Connect their story with your own story and a part of the Gospel. This assumes that we know the Gospels and can access the presence of Jesus in most any human situation: fear, loss, anger, poverty, betrayal, confusion, pride. You may share an experience where the power of Jesus helped you to overcome an obstacle. This connection isn't about institutions or denominations but is instead about relationship and spiritual journey.
4. Ask how you can be in prayer for the person, and ask if the other person will pray for you. This places you together on the same level.

Here you will want to be as humble as possible, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit to speak through the Gospels and the act of prayer. At this point the action is more important than the response, which you can't control.

5. Seek to connect the other person to your community. In our time, the basic steps will be a group that meets outside the church (say in a coffee shop), or in a context of mission and serving, or in a new group in formation. Don't worry if you get stalled here, but don't hesitate to name your own worshipping community. It is a relational process.
6. Stay in touch with the person and continue to develop the relationships — no matter the response. You are investing in the friendship for the sake of the other person and not for any congregational or institutional gain.
7. Continue to pray for the other person each day. Occasionally let the other person know you are doing this.

There is a mutually reinforcing relationship between becoming a disciple (spiritual formation) and making disciples (mentoring). We often learn best by teaching and leading: at the same time, our own lives are shaped, formed, and enriched by deep friendships.

This article is excerpted from *Fresh Expressions: A New Kind of Methodist Church for People Not in Church* (Abingdon Press, 2017) by Kenneth H. Carter and Audrey Warren. The book is designed with a small group Bible study format, intended to stimulate ideation for new forms of ministry in and through a congregation. Available at [Cokesbury](#) and [Amazon](#).

Related Resources:

- “The Possibilities of Fresh Expressions,” a *Leading Ideas Talks* podcast featuring Ken Carter and Audrey Warren
- Networks and Third Places are Today's Mission Field* by Ken Carter and Audrey Warren
- What is Your Faith Development Process?* By Bob Farr And Kay Kotan

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Ken Carter

Kenneth H. Carter, Jr., is resident bishop of the Florida Area of the United Methodist Church. His most recent book is *Fresh Expressions: A New Kind of Methodist Church for People Not in Church* (Abingdon Press, 2017), available at [Cokesbury](#) and [Amazon](#).

Audrey Warren

Audrey Warren serves as senior pastor at First United Methodist Church of Miami. Since 2013 she has co-convened the Fresh Expressions movement in the Florida Annual Conference. She is co-author (with Kenneth H. Carter, Jr.) of *Fresh Expressions: A New Kind of Methodist Church for People Not in Church* (Abingdon Press, 2017), available at [Cokesbury](#) and [Amazon](#).

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